

California Probation Services Survey

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Executive Summary

The Probation Services Task Force was formed in August 2000 and over a three-year period worked to conduct a comprehensive examination of probation services across California. The task force's final report indicated that no consistent, statewide information base exists that details the role of probation officers or the range of services provided by departments. The task force therefore proposed a series of research projects to gain a more thorough understanding of the range of services that are available to probationers and of how those services are staffed and funded.¹

The Probation Services Survey Results is the first of these projects. The goal of this study was to quantify the array of adult and juvenile probation services available across counties, tell how those services are funded, describe the functions provided by probation staff, and detail the amount of probation staff time. The study makes several findings that build on the work of the task force report and that will inform how the task force recommendations are implemented. These findings are outlined below and described in detail in the body of this report. Key findings of the survey include the very high proportion of probation officer time devoted to juvenile probation services, and in particular to juvenile custody services; the high proportion of officer time spent in writing reports and performing other court-related activities; the infrequent provision of balanced and restorative justice programs and other alternatives to traditional probation services; and the struggle of probation departments in small counties to provide a range of services and to fund services with general funds. There are two caveats about the survey findings that should be noted. The current study does not attempt to evaluate the level at which these services and programs are provided. The survey does not address how many examples of each type of program are available within each county (e.g., total number of mental health programs) or whether there are sufficient resources to provide programs to all those probationers who may be in need of them. In addition, the purpose of the current report is to present the frequency with which programs and services are provided and the resources used to support them, it does not attempt to address what services should be provided or what services probation departments or the courts would like to have available to juvenile and adult probationers.

Key Findings on Allocation of Probation Resources

- Probation services across California are heavily weighted toward juvenile probation, and juvenile custody in particular. Across all counties, an average of 77 percent of probation officer time is allocated to juvenile services. The 15 largest counties in the state reported that approximately one-half of all probation officer time was spent on juvenile custody services, one-quarter on juvenile noncustody services, and one-quarter on adult services.

¹ Administrative Office of the Courts, California State Association of Counties, *Probation Services Task Force Final Report* (2003). <http://www2.courtinfo.ca.gov/probation/documents/new/fullreport.pdf>. The research agenda is reproduced in Appendix 1 of this document.

Key Findings on Juvenile Probation

Juvenile Intake\Pre-Disposition and Supervision Services

- A common set of intake and pre-disposition services is provided by 90 percent or more of counties. These include: counsel and dismiss, six-month informal probation, placement services, social study/disposition reports, court officer, and victim restitution.
- More than 90 percent of counties also provide a common set of supervision services. These include: drug testing, drug searches, violation of probation, relative/foster/group home supervision, and court reviews.
- These intake and supervision services are most frequently provided directly by probation staff, rather than by providers from outside the probation department.
- Beyond this set of frequently provided services, considerable variation exists in services provided across counties. Generally, larger counties offer a wider array of services than do smaller and medium-sized counties.²

Juvenile Probation Programs

- The most frequently provided juvenile probation programs across all counties are independent living, anger management, prevention/early intervention, and substance abuse.
- Large counties are generally more likely to have a wider variety of additional juvenile probation programs available.
- Only half of small counties reported having diversion programs available to juvenile probationers, compared to 78 percent of medium-sized counties and 80 percent of large ones.
- Services identified in recent policy guidelines as key to the administration of probation and to the functioning of the juvenile court are often minimally provided across counties. These include balanced and restorative justice services, girls' programs, day treatment centers, and alternative confinement programs.³

² This report defines a large county as having a population greater than 500,000, a medium-sized county as having a population of 100,000 to 500,000, and a small county as having a population of under 100,000.

³ For policy guidelines see *Probation Services Task Force Final Report* (footnote 1) and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Juvenile Delinquency Cases* (2005).

These services either were infrequently provided or were allocated only minimal staff resources.

- The majority of counties provide juvenile detention services and some form of juvenile post-disposition commitment services; 50 percent of counties conduct ranch/camp programs.

Juvenile Probation Officer Staffing and Activities

- A large proportion of juvenile probation staff resources are spent on juvenile detention/commitment services, regardless of county size.
- On average, two-thirds of all juvenile probation staff resources are spent on juvenile custody services.
- The service on which probation departments spend the greatest amount of staff time is report writing. On average, the staff time spent on reports is two to three times higher than for any other service provided.
- Probation staff also spent a substantial portion of time providing court officer services, home supervision, violation of probation, relative/foster/group home supervision, and court reviews.

Funding of Juvenile Probation Services

- A mix of general funds and grants was used to support most of the frequent intake and supervision services.
- Small counties are less likely to support services with general funds and more likely to support them with grants, including placement services, preplacement services, and home supervision.
- Most juvenile probation programs are supported by multiple-funding sources, including grants, general funds, and outside funding.
- While many programs are partially grant funded, few are supported wholly by grants.
- Programs most likely to be grant funded include wraparound, prevention/early intervention, and substance abuse.

Key Findings on Adult Probation

Adult Intake and Supervision Services

- A common set of intake services is provided by 80 percent or more of counties. These include general reports, victim restitution services, Proposition 36 reports, victim impact statements, and court officer services.
- A group of supervision services is common across counties. These services are available in 80 percent of counties. Such services include drug testing, drug searches, 1203.09 PC transfers, Prop. 36 reviews, violation of probation, and collections.
- The availability of additional services varies across counties. In general, large counties are more likely than smaller ones to provide these additional intake and supervision services, including drug court reports, domestic violence court reports, and mental health court reports.
- While most counties provide victim-related services such as victim restitution and victim impact statements, only 24 percent of respondents indicate that restorative justice programs are available to victims of adult offenders in their counties.

Adult Probation Programs

- The most frequently provided adult probation programs include those dealing with substance abuse, batterers, anger management, sex offenders, and mental health. These programs are provided by 80 percent or more of counties.
- The gap in frequency between the most frequently provided programs and other adult programs is considerable. The next most frequently available adult probation program is victim awareness, which is available in 58 percent of counties.
- Additional adult probation programs are more frequently available in large counties than in small or medium-sized ones.
- The least frequently available programs are culture-specific services and services provided by community-based organizations (CBOs). Very few small or medium-sized counties provide either of these two services.

Adult Probation Officer Staffing and Activities

- On average, 28 percent of all probation staff resources are allocated to adult probation services.
- The most frequently available intake and supervision services are most often provided by probation staff, or provided jointly by probation and outside agencies.
- The majority of adult probation programs are provided by outside agencies. Probation staff are most frequently involved in the direct provision of work furlough programs, victim awareness programs, and batterers programs.
- At time of intake, the most time-intensive service for probation staff is writing intake/investigation reports. These typically use four times the staff resources as the next most time-intensive intake services (court officer and victim-related services) and eight times the staff resources as the most time-intensive supervision services (court reviews, violation of probation, drug testing, drug searches, collections, and warrant services).

Funding of Adult Probation Services

- General funds are the most frequent source of funding for the majority of the common intake services. These services are also often supported by grant funding.
- Supervision services are most often supported by a combination of general funds and grant funds. Grant funding is most often used to support drug testing and drug searches.
- Outside funds are rarely used to support adult intake or supervision services.
- Most of the frequent adult probation programs are funded through either outside funds or a combination of funding types. Many programs are also funded through grants, although few programs are supported solely by grant funding.